

KANSAS CITY COMMUNITY RELEASE CENTER

Horizon Article

Submitted by Unit Supervisor Lilly Angelo

May 30, 2006

The Kansas City Community Release Center (formerly known as the KaCee Honor Center), originated in 1978 and was located at 919 Oak Street in an older hotel in Downtown Kansas City. **Gene Morgan** was the first Superintendent followed by **Ron Schmidt**, **Sharon Fairchild**, **Sally Halford** and the current Superintendent, **Kim Jones-Drury**. Previous Associate Superintendents were **Calvin Palmer**, **Guy Humphrey** and currently **Marilee Lewis-Palmer**.

In December 1998, the Kansas City Community Release Center (KCCRC) moved from the 919 Oak St. location to a new facility located at 651 Mulberry St. The new facility is a two-story structure with 75,000 sq. feet of space. Funding for the KCCRC replacement was obtained from an August 1994 general obligation bond vote of the people. The construction and design costs for the new facility were \$10.3 million.

KCCRC is a work release program that transitioned from the Division of Adult Institutions (DAI) to Probation and Parole case management in 2001. Classification staffs' roles and job titles changed from Caseworkers/Corrections Classification Assistants to Probation/Parole Officers and Probation/Parole Officer Assistants. Also, Functional Unit Manager titles changed to Probation/Parole Unit Supervisors. By October 2003, these staff began processing Probation and Parole violation reports, case summary reports, home and employment investigations and addressing offenders' special conditions.

An additional component of KCCRC's transition involves housing and processing parole violators for the Jackson County district offices and current plans are under way to add an on-site 30-bed community supervision center.

KCCRC has the capacity to house 350 offenders in six housing units, one of which is a female housing unit. In addition, the Temporary Administrative Segregation Unit (TASC) has a design capacity to hold 20 offenders waiting processing.

Upon program entrance to KCCRC, offenders are assigned to a two-week orientation. Following orientation the offenders are assessed and referred to relevant treatment services, if necessary. Offenders are required to obtain and maintain full-time employment while housed at the facility. They work for various employers throughout the Kansas City area, but are not allowed to work where alcohol is the main source of revenue, nor within adult entertainment venues. Employed offenders also pay federal, state and local taxes through their payroll deductions from work. Offenders are required to reimburse the state for their room and board at KCCRC at a rate of \$10 per day. This fee can be waived for offenders with other financial obligations (such as court-ordered child support) and the disabled.

Offender employment is paramount to their success, and KCCRC has addressed this issue in two ways. First, by partnering with Connections to Success, a community-based organization that offers an on-site intense two-week employment workshop. Secondly, KCCRC staff assisted with the coordination and participated in the Kansas City-area Offender Job Fair held on May 11, 2006 at the Pioneer College in Kansas City. KCCRC referred nearly 75 offenders to the job fair and held the required job readiness classes on-site weekly with assistance from the Department of Economic Development's Division of Workforce Development. The job fair was a collaborated effort with the U.S. Federal Parole Offices, Kansas Department of Corrections, other district offices, and community organizations.

In addition, offenders from KCCRC have participated in a number of community service projects over the years. Offenders regularly assist the Department of Economic Development with the set-up and clean-up for community events held at the Richard Berkley Park on the riverfront, Union Station, and the University of Missouri-Kansas City. They also assist the West Bottoms business organization with area clean-ups in the West Bottoms.

KCCRC takes great strides in maintaining the Department's goal of public safety. Upon arrival, all sex offenders are restricted to the facility and escorted by custody staff to the Jackson County Sheriff's Department to meet the mandated registration requirements. In addition, annually on Halloween, all sex offenders are required to be in the facility no later than 6 p.m. KCCRC verifies all offender activities. If an offender's whereabouts are unknown after three hours, a warrant for his arrest is issued. Absconder packets containing pertinent offender information are completed for all sex offenders, dangerous felons and high-profile cases. The packet is forwarded to the Fugitive Apprehension Unit to assist in the offender's apprehension. KCCRC randomly searches each housing unit for contraband twice monthly, along with special strip searches for offenders entering and exiting the facility. Also, staff routinely conducts offender urinalysis and breathalyzer tests and assists law enforcement by providing updated offender photos.

Although public safety is a very important issue, so are the responsibilities of the KCCRC Personnel Club, which is to boost staff morale by providing support, encouragement and appreciation. The Personnel Club is composed of six members: **Lilly Angelo**, president; **Latonia Cubit**, vice-president; **Mary Shields**, treasurer; **Cicely Riley**, secretary; **Debbie Carroll**, representative; and **Stacey Damron**, representative.

Over the years, KCCRC's Personnel Club has encouraged staff participants to adopt families during the holiday season, donate used cell phones and park benches, plant trees for the Newhouse Battered Womens Shelter, and to lend a hand to a KCCRC employee with funding to assist a parent with travel to the U.S. from abroad. In addition, KCCRC staff has participated in the law enforcement Polar Bear Plunge for Special Olympics two years in a row and were recent participants in the Corporate Challenger events along with other Western Region district offices. The Personnel Club continues to receive recognition throughout the Department for generous giving and financial contributions to

a staff member who experienced tragedies resulting in financial difficulties. KCCRC staff is often recognized by the Personnel Club for their hard work and involvement by hosting annual staff picnics, holiday parties, and staff appreciation celebrations. The Personnel Club has purchased a gazebo and picnic tables for staff, continues to purchase and plant flowers along the facility entranceway each spring, and routinely purchases special tokens of appreciation annually during Correctional Employees' Week for each staff member.

Current staff at KCCRC includes Superintendent **Kim Jones-Drury**; Associate Superintendent **Marilee Lewis-Palmer**; Chief of Custody **Billie Bledsoe**; Lieutenants **William Osborn, Shelley Gray, Jay Strain, and Simeon Johnson**; Sergeants **Donna Jackson, Yvonne Peddycourt, Robert Hall, Lee Barry**; and 34 Correction Officers; Unit Supervisors **Lilly Angelo** and **Cicely Riley** and eight Probation and Parole Officers, two Violator Unit Parole Officers and five Probation/ Parole Officer Assistants; Senior Office Support Assistant **Pat Harris** and two OSA's; Food Service Manager **Charles Zimmerman** and four cooks; Maintenance Supervisor **Jim Criley** and two maintenance workers; Storekeeper II **Mary Shields**; Records Supervisor **Debbie Carroll** and one records officer; Business Office Supervisor **Maher Chamma** and three account clerks.